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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and Robert A. Childress, Resident Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General, Richmond Field Office, announced that Bettie Johnson, age 46, of Emporia, Virginia, pled guilty today before United States Magistrate Judge Dennis Dohnal to one count of theft of government property and one count of making false statements to employees of the Social Security Administration (SSA) with the intent to defraud. Johnson faces a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment, and a fine of up to \$250,000 on the theft of government property count, and five years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000 on each of the other counts. In addition, Johnson will be required to pay restitution to the SSA, as well as to a private pension fund that was also defrauded. Sentencing is set for May 6, 2003.

Johnson's father, while alive, was receiving Retirement Insurance Benefits from the SSA and payments from the Club Employees Pension Fund paid for by his former employer in New York. Those benefits, by law, were to stop upon the death of Johnson's father. He died in 1982. However, Johnson continued to receive her father's benefits and never reported his death to the SSA or the Club Employee's Pension Fund. As part of her plea agreement, Johnson admitted to fraudulently converting the benefits since March 2001. The actual loss for which she is liable will not be determined until sentencing.

The case was investigated by agents of the Office of Inspector General for the Social Security Administration and the United States Secret Service. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Laura C. Marshall.

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